1· Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1920) 1932
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Kusase

764 for a cloth'. When the skin is put on the corpse, the tail comes in front and the three cowries are placed on it. This gives rise to a Kusase oath [195] *M'ba ne o ligidi ta*[1] (My father and his three cowries). Only the back of the goatskin is used; the flesh and the skin off the belly are cooked outside the compound and must only be partaken of by those who have lost their fathers.

764 765 [314] When a man dies, his wife's brother will bring roots which are boiled in water in which the widows bathe for three days, and after the third day the roots are buried (by a man who has lost his wife) in the cattle-kraal, or behind the compound. Each widow is then given a fruit of the *kponkporog* palm tree, from which the contents of the shell have been removed and "medicine" from "roots" put in its place. For a month, a little of this must be put in all the food which they eat. When they see the new moon, they will put aside this fruit and begin to prepare beer for the second funeral custom which is called *ku dar*. This date will be fixed by the *kudan*—the one in charge of the funeral custom—who is the heir. The first part of the funeral is called *ku-masir*[2] (the wet funeral). *Ku-dar* (the second funeral) is 765 derived from the word *dar*, to give some one permission to go off. "He 769 (the dead) will not go until all these things have been done." A day is fixed to begin the making of the beer, called *ku-malem* or *zel* (the setting of the funeral (beer). On that day, all the daughters of the deceased, who have married elsewhere, assemble at the compound of the deceased. Every one brings a fowl and a guinea-fowl; grain food

[171] [1] The Nankanse of Winkonɔ and the Black and Red *Tendana* have a similar oath, i.e. *Kare perega la ligidi ita.*

[535 831] [2] The night of the *ku-masir* custom, there is a dance at which the women choose men (*poa-leasig*). All the 'strangers' line up with the townspeople opposite them. The 'stranger' women choose from the townsmen and the townswomen from the men who are 'strangers'. A girl comes forward and touches the man of her choice with her finger. Some men will be chosen by two or three girls, another man may not be chosen at all. Such a one, *o nyu kuk* (has drunk of a bitter tree). These girls, except those who are married, pass the night with the man or men whom they have selected, sleeping on one mat with them, but they do not have sexual intercourse with each other. It would be a disgraceful thing if they did so. When I expressed scepticism as to this, I was informed that in the old days youths and maidens took great pride in resisting such temptations, and sought it rather than avoided it. The two sexes everywhere joined in games, dances, and swimming. A youth's ambition was to be renowned as a hunter, or good farmer, or wrestler. There was a firm belief that a profligate would be killed by an arrow in his first fight, or bitten by a snake. My informant said Europeans separated boys and girls in our schools and told boys not to think about women, and in consequence young boys were now always thinking about such things.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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841 contours. Before a woman menstruates (*lu sie*, lit. fall from the waist), and after she ceases altogether to menstruate, she cannot bear children.
842 When a woman has monthly periods she is capable of conception; when she is pregnant her periods stop. Thus menstruation, say the Tallensi, is a condition like pregnancy (*sie a puur*). It is the sign of capacity for child-bearing.

842 A man's *dɔŋam* becomes fruitful some time after puberty (*u solɔme*, verb), the main sign of which is the emergence of pubic hair. At first,
831 when the adolescent boy begins to have nocturnal emissions, his powers of procreation are not yet mature. It is only after some time, when he is completely *sol*, that he becomes capable of procreation. For procreation depends not on the sexual fluids ejaculated in the act of coitus by both man and woman, but on an active principle, as it were, in these fluids, the *ŋaamis*. The natives cannot explain more precisely what the *ŋaamis* is or how it works. What they maintain, emphatically, is that conception, both among men and among animals, cannot occur without sexual congress, and that it depends on the mingling (*gɛrɔm*) of the male sexual fluid with the female sexual fluid, or rather on the happy conjunction of their respective procreative essences (*ŋaamis*). Thus the function of the male is as essential as that of the female in procreation, and every child knows this.

842 Much evidence could be quoted in proof of this. Tallensi know that
831 a male's procreative potency resides in the testicles (*lana*), and they castrate small livestock which they want to prevent from breeding. The suspension of sex relations with a wife who has a nursing child is not a ritual matter, subject to mystical sanctions, but a practical necessity in order to prevent the woman from conceiving again too soon. Its observance is a question of conscience and self-control and few men get through life without a lapse. Some, I was told by one of my most trustworthy informants, practise *coitus interruptus* in order to avoid impregnating a nursing wife. Some men believe in a 'safe period'. I once heard a theory of this kind stated by a man to a couple of friends. His very
[841] modern-sounding theory was that the 'safe period' follows shortly after menstruation, since menstruation is a sort of pregnancy, and a pregnant woman cannot conceive again. But the clearest indication of the role attributed by the Tallensi to sexual conjugation in procreation was given in a conversation I listened to at the Chief of Tongo's house. The chief and the elders were talking about the White Fathers at Bolɔga. Garbled ideas about their doctrines have reached many Tallensi. Jesus was mentioned. One man said that the Fathers claimed that His mother conceived Him without knowing a man. A vigorous argument followed. Most of the men were openly sceptical, saying that it was quite impossible. But one or two had a deeper respect for the white man. True, they admitted, black people cannot have children without sex relations; but perhaps the white man, with his wondrous powers and knowledge,

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has a medicine which enables women to conceive without the participation of a male.

The notion of a procreative essence as distinct from the sexual fluid, however vaguely formulated it is, is of importance. Tallensi distinguish between sexual vigour or desire and the power of procreation. They know that people who are sterile (*kundɔɣar*) lack the latter but are not necessarily deficient in the former. Na'abzɔ, gossip said, was sterile because in his wild young days as a soldier he had lived with a Dagban woman who had maliciously caused him by some magical means to 'pour away all his power of begetting (*kpaa u dɔɣam waabi bah*)' in excessive intercourse with her. The uncharitable believed that he was impotent to boot, but others were prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt.

The Tallensi regard *dɔɣam* as, above all, a very precious human function, quite apart from the pleasures of sex. Thus, when Zikihib's young wife was left a grass widow for three years by her vagabond husband and had a child by a lover, it was unanimously condoned. Was she, it was argued, to cast away her powers of child-bearing for nothing (*zaŋ u dɔɣam bah wari*) just because she had a faithless husband and was herself too devoted to her children by him to run off with another man?

Lastly, the notion of the *ŋaamis* is the point at which mystical beliefs enter into the theory of conception. The obvious physiological facts of parenthood are summed up in the maxim, 'A man and a woman unite to procreate a child'. But behind plain physiology lies a mystery. Sometimes a man sleeps with his wife on a single occasion and she becomes pregnant (*u ŋɔɣa puur*—lit. she seizes a belly). At other times a man has relations with his wife regularly for months and she fails to conceive. Thus conception depends, in the last resort, on Heaven (*Naawun*), the Final Cause by which the Tallensi rationalize chance and which they invoke when empirical or less recondite mystical explanations fail. There is an essential mystical factor in procreation; and if a man or a woman fails to beget or bear a child, appeals can be made to the ancestor spirits and other mystical powers that intervene directly in human destiny. That is why a barren woman in her heart of hearts never gives up hope of having a child as long as she is still of child-bearing age, though the Tallensi know that barrenness is often a fact of nature beyond cure by either empirical or mystical agencies.

The Significance of Paternity and Patriliny

A person's genealogical ties are fixed by his parentage. Among the Tallensi these are the ties that plot the trajectory of the individual's life. The rights and duties that are critical for his role and status in society all stem, in the last resort, from the fact of birth. A person cannot divest himself, or be divested, of the bonds created by his birth and yet remain a member of the society; nor can he fully and unconditionally acquire

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593 basic dichotomy of *dug* and *yir* crystallizes. The comradeship which
578 grows up gradually between husband and wife with the lapse of time is the obverse, paradoxical as it may seem, of a process of gradual emancipation of the wife. As her children grow up, the centre of gravity of her life shifts more and more to them and away from her husband. If she has a grown-up son, her interests and emotions become centred more and more on him and his family by marriage. They constitute her *dug*, in which she is secure, honoured, and titularly, if not effectively, supreme. It is her son and grandson who will honour her spirit and commemorate her in worship after her death. Her son has become the effective breadwinner, and she looks to him for sustenance. If a young woman loses her husband, her grief is aggravated because she realizes that she has lost the head and pivot of her young family and must face uprooting and readjustment to a new partner. An old woman mourns the death of her husband greatly, too, but her grief is mitigated, if she
888 has a son, by her feeling of security and of fulfilment. The death of an
593 adult son, especially an only son, is an irreparable tragedy to her.

Thus it happens that a woman who has been twice married often lives, in her old age, with the oldest son of her first marriage, rather than with her husband. This was the case with Tiezien's old wife, Naaho; and the reason Tiezien and Naaho's son, Nyaaŋzum, gave for this brings out a point of the first importance. Laughing, they said, 'She is no use any longer as a wife, she can't cook; and she has no vulva now (*u le ka 'pɔn yaha*)—that is, her reproductive powers are finished. And they laid special stress on the last point.

A woman attains her fullest freedom in the family when she ceases to have sexual value, that is, from the native point of view, when she ceases to be reproductive.

The Sexual Relationship in Marriage

•831 The sexual relationship is the corner-stone of Tale marriage. At first
836 sight this is puzzling to the observer, for the Tallensi have a thoroughly matter-of-fact attitude about sex. They regard sex as a normal and natural appetite. Any aspect of the generative functions can be discussed without circumlocution in the presence of men, women, or children. A young woman, or a girl, may show signs of shyness or coyness, but no one ever shows any real embarrassment. Bawdy or salacious talk about sex is common amongst men; very rarely does it verge on the obscene. The Tallensi take it for granted that children will indulge in sexual play, and attach no value to prenuptial chastity. In the ritual of the Arrow Medicine (*Peentee*) for protection in war, the services of a virgin boy and virgin girl are required. These children are bound to the medicine by a taboo of chastity in early childhood; but they are released as soon as they approach puberty; for by that time, the natives say, they cannot be expected to resist sexual temptation. Tallensi say

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that prenuptial love affairs between adolescents have diminished since the coming of the white man, owing to increasing scarcity of marriageable girls and the consequent decline in the age of marriage for them. Premarital motherhood, on the other hand, they regard with a certain amount of scorn. It suggests a weakness of character, but it is not so disgraceful as to spoil the girl's chances of marriage.

The norms of kinship and marriage indirectly lead to prenuptial love affairs and adultery occurring mostly between distantly related members of the same clan. Such amours, whether casual or lasting, are not considered to be incestuous. That the parties are members of the same clan does not arouse public disapprobation, nor does it bring down ritual penalties on their heads or set jural sanctions in motion against them. This makes it seem the more inappropriate to pick out the sexual tie as the corner-stone of marriage. For, as we have previously indicated, the social relations of affinity arising out of marriage are always sharply contrasted with those of kinship; and if sex relations are the essential thing in marriage they must surely be incompatible with kinship. The paradox is resolved if we take into account certain principles of kinship that will be elucidated later. It is of interest here as evidence of the distinction, characteristic of Tale ideas about sex, which the natives draw clearly between sexual relations as a mode of sensual gratification and sexual intercourse in marriage.

Tallensi often cite the maxim 'Copulation and marriage are not the same thing (*Pɛn nyɛbɔg ni pɔɣadir, ba ka bu kɔ'la*)'. But they also say, 'We marry for the sake of copulation'; always adding, however, 'and for the sake of children'. The sexual motive, in short, is considered to be fundamental to marriage, both for men and for women; but it is fundamental as the means to the supreme end of marriage, the procreation of children.

The Economic and Property Relations of Spouses

The significance of sex in marriage will be clearer if we consider first the economic and property relations of husband and wife. By marriage a woman is transferred from her father's authority to that of her husband, and, consequently, to that of anyone under whose authority he comes. Explaining this, Tallensi say, 'A man owns (*so*) his wife. Has he not bought (*da*) her?' This does not mean that a wife is regarded as a chattel. In fact no man would dare to say in his wife's presence that he bought her, except in jest, in an outburst of violent anger, or deliberately to insult her. The concept 'own' here means that a man has authority over and is responsible for his wife. He 'owns' her working power, in the first place. She must perform the indispensable domestic tasks connected with the preparation of food for the household, the provision of water-supplies, the care of the home and of the children, and so forth. She must help him with the sowing and the harvesting of his crops,

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trite, especially after one has heard it fifty times. But it is charged with deep emotion for the native to whom it stands for all the tribulations and anxieties connected with the whole task of bringing up a child.

Men say that these tribulations begin with the act of sex itself. Desired though it is for the pleasure it gives, sexual intercourse is debilitating. Ejaculation (*duun duurəm*, a term primarily used for micturition) is a giving up of something vital that is a source of strength and youth. That is why young, unmarried men are so much more vigorous than married men.

Then there is the strain under which a man lives during his wife's pregnancy, particularly if it is a first pregnancy. Pregnancy, the creation of life, must not be brought into contact with death. Hence he, as the father of his wife's coming child, must not take direct part in mortuary or funeral rites. If he is one of the bereaved, the rites he is compelled to undergo are modified so as to eliminate contact with the corpse or objects symbolizing it. No particular evil is thought to follow on a breach of this taboo, which can, in fact, be magically purged if circumstances compel a man to it. But no man would be so callous as to flout the taboo deliberately.

Again, a man must not cut a new bush farm while his wife is pregnant, lest she miscarry. Both are critical events, affectively as well as socially, involving economic readjustments and the assumption of new responsibilities. Preparing a new bush farm absorbs you completely; it is, the natives say, 'a commotion of the heart (*suhkpelɛg*)'. But when your wife is pregnant you 'take heed only of her pregnancy (*i wona u puur la*)'. You cannot give attention, at the same time, to a new and vital economic enterprise like cutting a new bush farm. Apart from a wife's pregnancy only two other critical happenings are so obsessing as to be considered mystically incompatible with making a new bush farm—building a new house, a momentous undertaking, both materially and ritually, which marks an important change in a man's social personality; and taking a new wife, which also involves or portends big readjustments in one's social relations. It is significant that a man who is cutting a new bush farm or building a new house keeps away from funerals outside his own inner lineage since they are both emotionally disturbing and a distraction. All these critical events demand watchfulness and solicitude, for unknown dangers of both a physical and a mystical kind threaten their outcome. A man has to go about consulting diviners. He offers special sacrifices to his ancestors and puts the matter in their particular care.

Another sign of the concern that tempers a man's joy at his wife's pregnancy is the caution he must use in the chase. He must not kill certain mystically dangerous animals, else his wife may miscarry or bear a deformed child.

A man's close relatives are also concerned when his wife is pregnant, especially if it is a first pregnancy. His mother and the older women of

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and are taunted for months afterwards by their fellows. But these are not the reasons why children so rarely commit this impropriety. It is because of the intimacy, the closeness to each other in daily life, of brother and sister. Children do not need to be told that it is wrong to copulate with a sibling of the same joint family; they know it themselves. And, in fact, children from the age of 6 or 7 and upwards always say, with an expression of disgust, that sexual play with one's own siblings is wrong. Moreover, though they are not taught it as an avoidance, they are well aware of the conventional attitudes on the subject from listening to adult conversation.[1]

Incidentally, there are no taboos on conversation on sex matters among the Tallensi. Men, women, and children are all outspoken about sexual matters, though young women are apt to use euphemisms and to talk more circumspectly than men. Some men also say that it is embarrassing to talk about sexual subjects in front of young wives or female relatives-in-law. But no native hesitates to discuss these subjects in the presence of his sister.

These ties of mutual affection and devotion between *soog* siblings last throughout life and are extended to their children too. One sees this most dramatically in the grief people show, and especially women, over the death of a *soog* sibling. Tallensi say that very often the loss of a full brother is a greater shock to a woman than the death of her husband. A husband is replaceable, a full brother not, they add. When Kpe'emi died his wife fainted and afterwards sat about disconsolately, weeping at intervals for days. His *soog* sister also fainted, but, the men said, it had been much more difficult to revive her than her sister-in-law and she became ill with grief. Seeing the two young women together one could not doubt that it was the sister who felt the blow worst.

Another vivid demonstration of the strength of this tie between full siblings occurred when Tendaan Teroog performed the succession ceremony on succeeding to the custody of his maximal lineage *bəŋar*. A large crowd had gathered, chiefly men—clansmen, and neighbours and matrilateral kinsmen of Teroog's maximal lineage. Amongst them my

[1] The psychological undercurrents of these conventional attitudes do not concern us here, but it may be remarked that there is probably a strong and partly overt sexual component in the affective relations of brother and sister. I was struck by this when I once had an opportunity of observing the behaviour of Yamzoya (aged about 11) and his *soog* sister (aged about 8) who were playing together in a corner of the room where I was chatting to their father. The children, who were quite naked, stood embracing each other, the boy with his legs round his sister's, and they twisted and wriggled about as if they were engaged in a mixture of an orgiastic dance and a wrestling-match. They were both in a state of high excitement, panting and giggling and muttering to each other, with obvious sexual pleasure. They seemed to be oblivious of their surroundings. This game went on for about twenty minutes after which they separated and lolled back as if exhausted. These two children were most attached to each other.